

Solve the mystery: Death in the Office

Written by Tom Fowler (abridged), source: www.5minutemystery.com

It was 8:35 A.M. and Cynthia Peck was not only in a bad mood but late for work too, which was very unusual for her. At 7:13 it started raining hard. She knew it was 7:13 because she looked at the digital clock in her car when the first thick raindrops fell on her **windshield**¹. As she entered the Ames building, she **cursed**² silently because her oversized umbrella didn't keep her dry.

Cynthia Peck was 37 years old and a vice president of the Ames Marketing Company. She knew something was wrong when she **exited**⁴ the sixth floor elevator and met several uniformed police officers waiting for her to arrive. Before the officers had a chance to say anything to her, she asked, “**What is going on?**”⁵

Detective Sergeant Kyle Whitmore answered, “Are you Cynthia Peck?”

“Yes,” she answered and asked again, “**What’s going on?**”⁵

“There is a dead man in your office. Your assistant, Ms. Brewer, found him this morning. Identification in his wallet shows him to be Mr. Trent Willis. Do you know him?”

Cynthia showed no emotion as she answered, “Yes, we had a meeting in my office **scheduled**⁶ for this morning. What happened?”

“He was murdered,” the detective answered, watching Cynthia carefully, and added, “he has a letter opener in his chest. He only had his cell phone and briefcase.” The detective did not share with her the fact that it was clear that the **powerfully built**⁷ Trent Willis had a violent fight with his attacker.

Cynthia now felt **dizzy**⁸. Sweat showed on her high forehead as she asked, without visible emotion, “Who did it?”

“We don’t know yet,” Sergeant Whitmore answered. He saw the wetness on Cynthia’s clothing.

“Please join us in the conference room when you dry off a little.”

“Thank you,” she gratefully replied. When she entered the conference room, Cynthia saw that her assistant, Megan Brewer, was already sitting between her boss, company president Steve Ledbetter and a member of her marketing team, Josh Kesler. She quickly took a seat.

Sergeant Whitmore could see that the Ames employees, with the **exception**⁹ of Steve Ledbetter, seemed to be between 35-40 years old and in good physical condition. President Ledbetter was the **exception**⁹, he was 58 years old and at least 50 kilos **overweight**¹⁰.

He began to speak, “Ms. Brewer found the victim at 7:51 this morning. Mr. Willis, as you know, Ms. Peck, had an 8:15 appointment to see you. Ms. Brewer says that she doesn't know how he got to the sixth floor and into the office. You know that the stairways are locked and a **passcode**¹¹ is needed to **exit**⁴ the elevator on the sixth floor. Now, Ms. Peck and Ms. Brewer are the only persons with a passkey into Ms. Peck’s office, but Ms. Brewer informs us that she left her passkey on her outer office desk for a few moments while she made a cup of coffee in the **breakroom**¹². Security tells us that four persons came to the sixth floor before 7:51.” Whitmore stopped for a moment to catch his breath and then added, “And those persons are all of you. Before anyone asks, records show Ms. Peck **exited**⁴ the elevator at 6:45, **a little over an hour**¹³ before Mr. Trent was found.”

“It’s true, Sergeant. Stupidly, I left the signed contract which I wanted to give to Mr. Willis at home. I had to return home and get it.”

The sergeant looked at Cynthia and said, “OK, for now. What security shows is that Ms. Peck

arrived at 6:45, and Ms. Brewer was next at 6:59. At 7:25, Mr. Kesler arrived. Mr. Ledbetter was last to arrive at 7:40.” Sgt. Whitmore paused and looked at each of them and then added, “It’s not probable that somebody **hid**¹⁴ overnight on the sixth floor, but we’re now checking security cameras. **It seems**¹⁵ that one of you murdered Trent Willis.”

Megan began to cry. Softly, Sgt. Whitmore said to her, “I’m sorry, Ms. Brewer, this is unpleasant but necessary.

Steve Ledbetter asked, “Why not check the cameras to see when Mr. Willis entered?”

“Because **lightning knocked them out**¹⁶ early this morning, before the rain started,” was the sergeant’s answer. Then he turned to Cynthia and said, “Let’s begin with you, Ms. Peck. You first arrived at 6:45. Did you enter your office?”

“Yes. It was then that I discovered that I left the contract at home.”

“Security shows you left the sixth floor at 6:49,” Whitmore said.

“That’s right,” Cynthia answered.

“**So it took you an hour and 46 minutes to get back here?**”¹⁷ Whitmore asked.

“Right again. The rain started at 7:13 and there was a traffic jam. I was in my car all the time, except for the short time I was in my apartment looking for the contract.” Cynthia thought for a moment then added, “I made several **cell phone**¹⁸ calls from my car, one of them around 7:10 to the newspaper delivery service, one to my husband’s office around 7:35 and another just after 8:00 to my doctor’s office. Telephone company records will show my **cell phone**¹⁸ to be a long way from here between shortly after leaving until after 8:15 or so.” As she said this, she handed Sgt. Whitmore her **cell phone**¹⁸.

Whitmore thanked her and turned to Cynthia’s assistant, Megan Brewer, who was calm now. He said, “You **exited**⁴ the elevator at 6:59. Did you see anything strange when you arrived?”

“Nothing. I noticed the lightning outside the windows but that is all.”

Thinking for a moment, he asked, “Did Ms. Peck call you at anytime after leaving to return home?”

“No, but that is not unusual. She only calls when she needs to. This morning, she sent an email before she left, she explained the situation and asked me to make Mr. Willis comfortable.”

Whitmore turned to Josh Kesler and asked, “What about you? You got here at 7:25. Did you see or hear anything unusual?”

“No,” was his answer.

Did you make any calls on your cell phone or from the office; anything that can prove you are not the killer?”

Nervously, Josh replied, “No, nothing.”

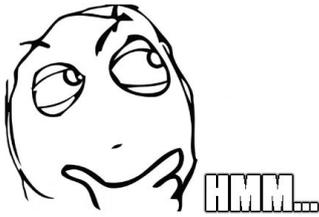
Whitmore thought for a long moment, and then asked Steve Ledbetter. “Do you have a raincoat?”

“Yes, but I do not have it with me. As president of the company, I have a car and driver. Maurice, the driver, always stops the car right at the front door so I never wear a coat.”

Turning back to Josh Kesler, “And you? Do you have a raincoat?”

Josh was **puzzled**¹⁹ but answered, “No, but I have an umbrella. If you want to see it, **it’s drying**²⁰ in my office.”

Sergeant Whitmore thought for a moment. Then he turned around, **pointed**²¹ to the murderer and said to the officer guarding the door, “**Arrest**²² this person for second degree murder.”



Now what do YOU think? Who did Sergeant Whitmore arrest?
Who killed Trent Willis?

Go to solution: <http://www.jsmundo.cz/solution-to-death-in-the-office-level-b1/>

GLOSSARY which you may find helpful (Glosář, který se vám může hodit)

¹windshield (AmE), windscreen (BrE); čelní sklo

²curse; klít, nadávat, proklínat

⁴exit = leave, depart, go out, get out (odejít, vyjít, opustit)

⁵What is going on?; Co se děje?

⁶scheduled; naplánovanou

⁷powerfully built; statně stavěný

⁸dizzy; mající závrat'; I feel dizzy = točí se mi hlava, mám závrat'

⁹exception; výjimka

¹⁰overweight; nadváha

¹¹passcode; přístupový kód

¹²breakroom = lunchroom; kuchyňka (pro zaměstnance ve firmě)

¹³a little over an hour; něco málo přes hodinu

¹⁴hide (hid, hidden); skrýt, schovat (se), ukrývat (se)

¹⁵It seems...; Zdá se, že..., Vypadá to, že...

¹⁶lightning knocked them out; blesk je vyřadil z provozu (knock out = vyřadit z provozu)

¹⁷So it took you an hour and 46 minutes to get back here?; Takže Vám to trvalo hodinu a 46 minut, než jste se vrátila zpět?

¹⁸cell phone; mobilní telefon

¹⁹puzzled; zmatený

²⁰it's drying; schne

²¹point (to); ukázat (k, směrem k)

²²arrest; zatknout